

## Entrenching geopolitical imaginations

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## **ENTRENCHING GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINATIONS: BRAND(ING) TURKEY THROUGH ORHAN PAMUK**

It has become commonplace for a wide variety of politicians, foreign and Turkish, to use Orhan Pamuk as a reference point when speaking about Turkey. George W. Bush, the former US president, for example, has said that “the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk has said that the finest view of Istanbul is not from the shores of Europe, or from the shores of Asia, but from a bridge that unites them, and lets you see both” and that “his work just like the Republic of Turkey has been a bridge between cultures” (Bush 2004). Davutoğlu, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister of Turkey, despite Pamuk’s controversial statements<sup>1</sup> a couple of years earlier also referred to Orhan Pamuk to make his case for Turkey being a country at the “centre of powerful cultural mobility that can make synthesis of all” (Davutoğlu 2009). In a sense, Bush and Davutoğlu, among many others, have utilized Pamuk, Turkey’s one and only Nobel Laureate in Literature, whose novels are usually set in Istanbul, with protagonists torn between modernity and tradition, and known for their lifestyles that represent the clash of East and West (Bayrakçeken and Randall 2005; Dufft 2009; Coury 2009), to give substance to their arguments regarding Turkey’s inbetweenness. It is this very same inbetweenness that is produced as a result of the idea of real and perceived dualities of Turkey that runs in tandem with “brand Turkey” (Rumelili and Süleymanoğlu-Kurum 2017).

This paper is about how, through consumers, the market (commercial sphere) reproduces a discourse that aligns with the political/international and the cultural – as evidenced by the quotes above. This article has two goals. The first is to deconstruct the nation branding mechanisms at work on the market/consumer side that runs parallel to the political/international and the cultural fields. The second goal is to draw attention to the fact

that the recently developing terrain within the international relations literature that has started to think about nation branding as part of international relations, has to pay better attention to cultural elements and unintended branding outcomes, when it comes to nation branding in this context.

Based on the analysis of data comprising interviews with Orhan Pamuk and amazon.com and amazon.co.uk consumer reviews of his work, we argue that the consumers of Pamuk's works also duplicate and reiterate dualities that have come to represent Turkey in the political/international and the cultural fields. Drawing on the framework of fields of production and consumption (Bourdieu 1983; Bourdieu and Nice 1980), we explore how both Turkey as a nation-brand and Orhan Pamuk as a cultural producer are consumed and reproduced in alignment with the political/international and cultural fields. Here markets act as one of the grounds where politics and arts intersect, and consumers unwittingly co-create both Pamuk as an artist brand and Turkey as a nation-brand as they consume Pamuk's works. Consumers reinforce the perception that Pamuk is authorized and entitled to speak about and for Turkey, resulting in the branding and rebranding not only of Pamuk's works and Pamuk's personality, but also of Turkey. We argue and aim to show that by actively writing, talking and discussing them, the consumers of literary products (interviewers and reader reviewers, in our case), not only construct and bolster geopolitical imaginations, but also position artist brands and nation-brands based on these geopolitical imaginations. Put differently, we do not offer a causal link, but rather explain the mechanisms of this co-creation. This positioning has not only been the brand strategy deliberately chosen by the state, it is also unintendedly produced unintentionally, and reproduced by both Turkish and foreign cultural producers and cultural intermediaries, and by consumers while consuming the works of Orhan Pamuk.

Eker Roditakis (2015) argues that Pamuk's popularity in the West was due to the fact that Pamuk's works "came to stand metonymically for Turkish cultural identity" (p. 292). While we concur with that argument, we are interested in identifying the mechanisms that lead to the (re)production of a geopolitical imaginary that runs in tandem with Turkey's east-meets-west nation brand positioning. The first of these mechanisms is at work when Orhan Pamuk is projected as the novelist of Istanbul—a city, which, because of its geographical positioning on two different continents, Europe and Asia, has come to stand as a proxy representing Turkey. The second mechanism is at work when comments both from the readers and reviewers repeatedly draw attention to Pamuk's literary style, which combines East and West, and also to the tension between dualities that encapsulate Turkey, namely modernity and tradition, secularism and religion, Easternness and Westernness, and assign these dualities with the role of proxy for the dualities of Turkey. The third mechanism is the romanticization of Turkey's tensions, which reproduces these tensions by highlighting Turkey's liminality and hybridity. These mechanisms, which will be elaborated below, we argue, help Pamuk and his works to create and bolster a nation-brand image that runs in tandem with the official nation-brand identity. Thus, rather than problematizing Orhan Pamuk's works, we delineate and elaborate on how Orhan Pamuk's works, his persona, and his perceived and assumed association with Istanbul have been received by the cultural consumers and how this reception reproduces and reinforces existing dualities in Turkey's brand identity and geopolitical imagination.

Nation-branding focuses on a country's image holistically in the international arena and across political, economic and cultural fields (Bond et al. 2001; Quelch and Jocz 2004; van Ham 2001; Melissen 2005; Konecnik and Go 2008; Kotler and Gertner 2002). It aims to construct and fix a particular identity of a nation within the global framework, and it

assumes that a particular vision is reinforced by every act of communication engaged by a specific country (Anholt 2007, 2009). This definition of nation- branding assumes a high level of intent and a deliberate coordination by the state. In this paper, we look at a different act of communication and a different venue, i.e. consumption of an author's literary works and its interpretation in the making of this unintended nation-branding, as created and disseminated in popular journals, newspapers, and through amazon.co.uk and amazon.com reviews. In doing so, we combine the domain of nation-branding with a critical approach to geopolitical imagination and question the process and consequences of such cultural production and consumption. Hence, we recognize nation-brands as cultural, ideological and political objects (Schroeder and Salzer-Morling, 2006) and building on Browning (2016b), show nation-branding as spanning technical-economic, political and cultural spheres, as well as international relations.

This paper unfolds in two main sections. In the first section, we highlight the cross-pollination between hybridity, critical geopolitics and nation branding in general and the recent literature on Turkey that problematizes these topics. Then we analyze interviews with Pamuk in various media outlets and readers' reviews on amazon.com and amazon.co.uk, showing how three frequently appearing themes as mechanisms — Orhan Pamuk as the entitled novelist of Istanbul and Turkey; Orhan Pamuk's hybrid literary style that combines East and West; and romanticizing tensions in Turkey -- work in tandem to replicate, reproduce and reify brand-Turkey in the geopolitical imagination through cultural consumption.

## **Brand Turkey as a Marketable Hybrid: Geopolitics Meets Nation-Branding**

A nation brand concerns the country's image (e.g. Roth and Diamantopoulos 2009), and also identity (Browning 2015: p. 196). In the case of Turkey, as Rumelili and Süleymanoğlu-Kurum (2017) have argued, the creation and management of this image is closely related to geopolitical imaginations, so that it has almost become impossible to separate "brand Turkey" from Turkey's geopolitics, which is based on the idea of highlighting Turkey's in-betweenness and hybridity based on a variety of Turkey's geographical, developmental, temporal dualities, which are then touted as exceptional (Yanık, 2011).

The discourse emphasizing Turkey's simultaneous Easternness and Westernness directly or through various metaphors that referred to Turkey as a "bridge," or a "crossroads," and which defined Turkey both as a hybrid and a liminal country as well as an exception is not new, neither is it something peculiar to Turkey. Even before the establishment of modern Turkey, the bridge metaphor was highly in use, to point out the ambivalent territorial and civilizational belonging of Turkey (Dominian 1916) and continued to be the "dominant" metaphor that describes Turkey's hybridity and liminality at the same time (Ahıska, 2010, p. 15). Though the official branding of "brand Turkey" would have to wait until the JDP period (Rumelili and Süleymanoğlu Kurum 2017; Iğsız 2014), for decades, non-officially, the nation-brand was constructed in a way that referenced the East-meets-West hybrid (e.g. Kemming and Sandikci 2007; Sevin and Salcigil White 2011). Other countries such as Hong Kong and Kazakhstan (Zhang et al. 2015), as well as several others in South America (Canclini 2005) and in Central Asian (Marat 2009) have also created the in-between nation-brand identity, or as is the case of Nordic countries, their identity has been turned into a case of exceptionalism and subsequently into a brand (see Browning 2007).

Turkey is a case where all these, i.e. in-between identity, exceptionalism and branding come together. A triple (spatial, temporal and functional) layered in-betweenness discourse has emerged that argues for Turkish exceptionalism and justifies this by emphasizing Turkey's dual geographical location, for being a country that is transiting from traditional to modern. This then justified Turkey as a unique arbiter, giving Turkey a mediator position in the international system (Yanık, 2011). Turkey's spatial and temporal in-betweenness and hybridity also became the source of Turkey's functional in-betweenness and has been one of the sources of this claim for both being Eastern and Western yet being in between. Hence, Turkey's geographical in-between position also became its source of aspiration for its political, economic and social go-between role between East and West, Europe and the Middle East, and Christianity and Islam.

The bridges connecting the Asian Istanbul with the European one played an important role in this attempt to create and reify an image of Turkey as an in-between and go-between, placing Turkey into a liminal yet hybrid state based on Turkey's real, perceived and assumed dualities. The image of the Bosphorus Bridge<sup>2</sup> would continue to dominate even when recently some of the members of the JDP would propose replacing the idea of "Turkey as a bridge," with "Turkey as a center state," (Yanık 2017) on the grounds that being a bridge signified passivity and that it was time Turkey began practicing a proactive foreign policy (Davutoğlu 2004). Yet despite the reluctance to use the term bridge textually, as has been pointed out by Rumelili and Süleymanoğlu Kurum (2017) and Iğsız (2014), it is the JDP government that should be credited with the creation of "brand Turkey" based on the dualities of Turkey. Such commercial and professional "branding" of Turkey for the first time was fully in line with JDP governments' intensified neoliberal economic growth agenda, which aimed to search for new export markets as well as attract foreign direct investment in

a more aggressive manner (Kirişçi 2009; Kirişçi and Kaptanoğlu 2011; Öniş and Kutluay 2013).

This “brand Turkey” as the marketable hybrid is very much in line with Jaffe and Nebenzahl’s (2001) argument that the aim of nation branding should be “to create a clear, simple, differentiating idea built around emotional qualities which can be symbolized both verbally and visually and be understood by diverse audiences in a variety of situations. To work effectively, nation branding must embrace political, cultural, business and sport activities” (Fan 2006; p.6). This is exactly what is being done, with Turkey thought of as a marketable hybrid as hybridity, which is defined as, “the continuous two-way borrowing and lending between cultures, a form of transculturation or socio-cultural process where discrete practices and structures are combined to create new practices, objects, and structures” (Canclini 2005; p. 8). Hybrid identities, practices and conditions having market value are not new to literature. Patterson and Brown (2007) documented how Irish pubs imagined as liminal spaces are used in building the brand Ireland. In Turkey, this hybridity consists of behavior, practices, and values that range from everyday consumption choices (Sandikci and Ger 2002) to mending the link between Islamic values and consumption (Sandikci and Ger 2009), and from interpreting issues of power and gender (Yalkin, 2012) and identity building (Ustuner and Holt 2007) to leisure and beauty regimes (Sandikci and Ger 2002).

Hybridity and its representations take place within political, social and cultural reality (Kerrigan, Shivanandan, and Hede 2012) and such representations rely on *cultural production*, that encompasses the production, marketing and consumption of cultural products (Colbjørnsen 2014; Venkatesh and Meamber 2006). Literature is one of the areas where culture and commerce converge (Brown 2006) and therefore lends itself easily to commercial diplomacy as “markets are a primary means of distributing and debating cultural



representations” (Hull 2016: p. 128). Research at the intersection of geopolitics and markets needs to take into account how politics and cultural fields figure in the co-creation of nation-brands and hence, geopolitical meaning making and vice versa.

## **Method**

We draw on critical geopolitics, critical marketing and branding literatures, as well as methodologies that have evolved and developed around these literatures. Critical geopolitics have focused on deconstructing discourses and examining the mechanisms of power, space and knowledge creation (O’Tuathail and Dalby 1998: p. 1-3). Over time, the spatial imagination of the masses started to be examined through various aspects of popular culture varying from music to architecture and even to cartoons (Dodds 2000: p. 72), prompting international relations scholars to view popular culture as political texts and as sites where politics takes place (Franklin 2005; Nexon and Neumann: 2006). The audience reception study in critical geopolitics is a blossoming field, with a special interest in how audiences make geopolitical meaning as they consume popular culture (Dittmer 2008). While the analysis of geopolitical imaginations of moviegoers have recently started to be studied (eg., Dodds 2006; Anaz and Purcell 2010; Dittmer and Dodds 2013; Ridanpaa 2014), there has been a call for the analysis of the reception of literary texts in the making of geopolitical imaginations of the masses (Sharp 2000; Saunders 2010; Yap 2011), yet the link between literature and spatial politics has not received much attention so far. While interpretations of neither literary work (Schau 2006) nor nation-brands are rigid or uniform, contextual understandings can help illuminate how certain converging interpretations are reached and how they are re-worked into circulation. As Sharp notes, “it is only by interpreting the context of writing and reception, which envelop the work that it is possible

to understand the novel's relationship with the world that it seeks to narrate" (1996: p. 126). What is more, as Thompson (2010: p. 194) argues, bestsellers, or big books, "are the social constructions that emerge out of the talk, the chatter, the constant exchange of speech among players in the field" and it is this exchange of speech we focus on as data. A bestseller list represents more than just actual sales, it manifests the existence of a specific market (Colbjornsen 2014), and the same can be said of Orhan Pamuk's presence on online book retailers such as amazon.com and amazon.co.uk.

In this paper, by interpreting this reception, we intend to fill this gap. We focus on the reception of Orhan Pamuk's work, and draw our data from interviews with Orhan Pamuk, the reviews of critics, and the reviews of readers. Thus, we deconstruct the mechanisms that the audiences use to make meaning of cultural goods\ as they simultaneously consume and reproduce geopolitical discourses, and by doing so reinforce a specific nation brand.

Most of these reviews and interviews that constitute our data are readily accessible through Pamuk's official website, on amazon.com and amazon.co.uk, plus, especially regarding Pamuk's latest interviews on various different websites reached through Google on the Internet in order to be update. We treated the reviews and interviews about Orhan Pamuk's works as our data and undertook netnography (Kozinets 2010) to triangulate the data. Netnography is an interpretive method, which is suitable for studying online communities (Kozinets 2010). We treated the corpus that amazon.com and amazon.co.uk users created as a discourse that needed to be analyzed and interpreted. Previous academic studies have used data from amazon.com (Penz and Hogg 2011) and ebay (Denegri-Knott et al and Zwick 2012), both of which could be viewed as sites of contestation and creation of

shared meaning. Online communities such as Amazon are tangible for participants because as (Kozinets 2010) argues online communications “act as media of cultural transaction – the exchange not only of information, but of systems of meaning” (p. 12). Since amazon.com or amazon.co.uk reviewers, or any other review website, for that matter, produce and consume their own systems of meaning, over time, what has been written on one book becomes and reproduces the culture of this online community.

Our netnography included reading and interpreting interviews and reviews on three different websites: amazon.com and amazon.co.uk, and interviews and reviews on Orhan Pamuk’s official website [www.orhanpamuk.net](http://www.orhanpamuk.net). Table 1 below summarizes the number of reviews and the interviews with Orhan Pamuk from various different websites.

< insert Table 1 here >

In total, 1784 reviews and interviews were included in the data, and the data collection took place between January 2016 and December 2016. We treated this corpus as geopolitical discourse, which according to Agnew and Corbridge “is equivalent to theory about how the world works assumed implicitly in practice by a politician, writer, academic or ‘ordinary person.” (Agnew and Corbridge 1995: p. 47). Some of those reviews and interviews were neutral in their description of Pamuk’s work. That is, they said either good or bad things about the book such as “*excellent read*” or “*his worst*”, or gave some lengthy descriptions of the plot and characters, but what we focused on were the reviews and interviews that linked Pamuk’s work to Turkey. Finally, we should note that this corpus from where we draw our data is created mostly from and by non-Turks. While all of the interviews were conducted by non-Turks for non-Turkish newspapers or journals, it is hard

to make such a distinction for amazon.com and amazon.co.uk reviews, because the reviews are mostly penned with a nick or pseudonym which makes a classification based on nationality almost impossible. But since these reviews are written for English translations of Pamuk's works we assume that the corpus of reviews is created by non-Turks, thus giving us a glimpse of a foreign vantage point of Turkey's self- image and identity, hence its nation-brand abroad through a foreign audience.

The data were analyzed using a hermeneutic approach (e.g. Thompson 1997).<sup>5</sup> The ethical issue of informed consent in netnography (Kozinets 2002) was considered. Although users are warned that all the reviews written on amazon.com are public, to further anonymise the writers, the representative excerpts are cited with a random number. The limitation of our sample is that our interpretation encompasses the reception of Orhan Pamuk in the English speaking world, but, for the purposes of manageability and practicality such limitations are necessary<sup>6</sup>.

### **The Making of Marketable Hybrid's Mechanisms: Branding Turkey Through Orhan Pamuk**

O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2000) note that it is possible to build up "reputational capital" and product-place imagery that may in turn become important assets for a country. Product-country images can be established based on constructed narratives (Ger et al. 1999) and such narratives are abundant in cultural goods such as films, books, TV series and music. Just like the soap operas that have received immense attention in terms of the creation of "brand Turkey" in the recent past (e.g. Yörük and Vatikiotis 2013), we argue and show that Orhan Pamuk's works and persona, through the market, have both become tools through which "brand Turkey", based on Turkey's dualities, has come to life.

Data analysis of the corpus of reviews and interviews of Orhan Pamuk's works yielded three mechanisms where dualities that run parallel to Turkey's dualities are produced: Orhan Pamuk as the entitled novelist of Istanbul and Turkey; Orhan Pamuk's hybrid literary style that combines east and west; and the reproduction of the romanitized tensions of various other dualities of Turkey in Orhan Pamuk's works. Two of these themes are related to tropes that constantly show up in Pamuk's works, and one is related to Pamuk's literary style. The first theme which is almost a constant in Pamuk's work, including his novels and his biography, is Istanbul and the dualities that are seen as associated with Istanbul. The second layer of reproduction of Turkey's dualities is when reviewers and/or interviewers discuss Pamuk's literary style as a combination of East and West and they link it to the dualities of Turkey. The third theme that continuously appears in Pamuk's reviews and interviews, and which is partially reflected through the protagonists in his works, is the clash of east and west, of modernity and tradition. All of these themes eventually create an aura that authorizes and entitles Pamuk to speak for Turkey and about Turkey's real and perceived dualities.

### **Theme #1: Orhan Pamuk as the entitled novelist of Istanbul and Turkey**

In 2006, when Orhan Pamuk won the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Prize Selection Committee explained the reason for conferring this prize on Orhan Pamuk was for being a writer "who for the melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols of the clash and interlacing cultures" (nobelprize.org, 2006). Istanbul — Pamuk's native city - was the main setting for all of Pamuk's novels and his memoir *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, with the exception of Pamuk's *Kar (Snow)* novel, which is set in Kars. Istanbul being the main setting for Pamuk's works contributes to the branding of Turkey in several different ways.

First, the fact that Istanbul is a city spread out over two different continents, namely Europe and Asia, contributes to Turkey's dualities and also to Turkey's inbetweenness as well as hybridity. Put differently, the spatial duality of Istanbul is bolstered by other discursive dualities, and this is linked to the real and perceived dualities of Turkey. The review below on amazon.co.uk written after Pamuk's *The Black Book* neatly summarizes the attitude that Istanbul is a proxy for Turkey:

*"It's (Istanbul) a city that bridges continents, ideologies and faiths. Nowhere else on earth has a greater claim to the very quintessence of humanity than Istanbul. And yet modern Istanbul is a Turkish city, and perhaps its most fascinating aspect is its potential to mirror contemporary debates on religion versus secularism, tradition versus modernity, imperial past versus global present."* (Reviewer 717)

One such example highlighting dualities through Istanbul and factoring them into Turkey's dualities, appeared in *The Guardian* in January 2016. The interview was conducted for the opening of Pamuk's Museum of Innocence exhibition in London, where both Pamuk and another famous Turkish novelist Elif Shafak were, according to the interviewer, asked to discuss what "Istanbul meant for them" (The Guardian 2016). Obviously, there is nothing wrong with the question, but it is worthwhile highlighting the way the interviewer introduces Istanbul in a blatantly orientalist manner, focusing once again on the dualities of Istanbul which is then substituted for the dualities of Turkey:

*Istanbul is the name of a city and the name of an illusion. In reality, there is no such thing as Istanbul. There are only Istanbuls – competing, clashing and somehow coexisting within the same congested space. That is one of the themes I want to talk about with Orhan Pamuk, the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature. The loss of plurality and nuance. The increasing dominance of an ideology of sameness throughout our motherland* (The Guardian 2016).

In this *Guardian* interview, starting with the title of the interview-- "*Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak: Istanbul City of Dreams and Nightmares*,"-- Istanbul is presented through opposing

dualities, or with adjectives that stand out as antonyms. Istanbul, according to the interviewer, is a city of “*dreams and nightmares*,” which “is” and “is not” at the same time, “*clashes and coexists*” simultaneously, where “plurality” is becoming “sameness.” (The Guardian 2016).

The Guardian interview is not the only instance of Istanbul’s territorial dualities being fused and associated with Turkey’s dualities. There are many other examples of such an attitude that can be found in the reviews of Pamuk’s works as well as interviews conducted with him. In the most extreme cases, the dualities of Istanbul and Turkey, get fused with Orhan Pamuk’s persona, authorizing or entitling Pamuk to speak for or to represent Turkey. The following quote by Pamuk is an example of the creation of this entitlement mechanism.

*"I have spent my life in Istanbul, on the European shore, in the houses looking towards the Asian shore. Living by the water with a view of the opposite shore ceaselessly reminded me of my place in the world. Then one day a bridge connecting the two shores of the Bosphorus was built. When I went up on the bridge and surveyed the landscape, I realized it was still better and still more lovely to see the two shores at once. I felt that a bridge between two shores was the best thing to be. Speaking to each shore without completely belonging to either; this unveiled the finest scenery of all."* (Simons, 2001)

The above quote from Orhan Pamuk comes from a review published in the *Christian Science Monitor* states that it is taken from an article published in an anthology edited by the Council of Europe. Interestingly, this very same quote was then used in George W. Bush’s NATO speech delivered in Istanbul in 2004, which is also mentioned in the epigraph of this article. By claiming that “*seeing both shores at once*” is “more lovely” and that feeling “*that a bridge between two shores was the best thing to be*,” Orhan Pamuk positions himself as both the embodiment and the purveyor of in-betweenness. And those who refer to Pamuk’s fusing Istanbul’s and Turkey’s dualities with his persona give a tacit approval to this orientalization

by arguing that “it is precisely that blending that makes his work so appealing” (Simons 2001), in a way entitling and authorizing Orhan Pamuk to talk about Turkey.

One of the most important mechanisms in the making of the Orhan Pamuk brand is the authorization and entitlement mechanisms that give Pamuk the authority and the entitlement to speak about and for Turkey through Istanbul. Put differently, Pamuk’s use of context (i.e. Istanbul), the dualities in his style and in the contents of his novel are all automatically associated with the dualities of Turkey that produce a marketable hybrid for Turkey. By way of association, Pamuk is authorized and entitled to speak about Turkey which, by performing and reperforming, not only brands himself but also Turkey. Below are some excerpts from one commentary and interview about Pamuk and his work that authorize him to speak about/for Turkey.

*“Orhan Pamuk has become the man who tells the world about Turkey and this he does extremely well. Living in Istanbul, he has an important position as a gatekeeper, ushering in democratic oxygen and exporting Turkish experience. He has become, against his sensibilities, a political figure (Fischer 2007).”*

A similar dialogue takes place between the Der Spiegel interviewers and Orhan Pamuk.

**“DER SPIEGEL:** *Istanbul has remained your city to this day. You have a tremendous view from your office, where you write. At your feet lies the great bridge that spans the Bosphorus, linking Europe and Asia. How do you feel when you work here?*

**Pamuk:** *I'm happy. I sometimes joke that I am the first writer of historical fiction who can look out his window and point to the objects in his novels. I have a view of the entrance to the Bosphorus, the old city, Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque; in fact, I see all the mosques. It's an extremely privileged view, as I know, and I like to say that, as Istanbul's storyteller, I've earned it.*

**DER SPIEGEL:** *Many see you today as Turkey's leading intellectual. Isn't it paradoxical that you never wanted to be part of the cultural establishment, and yet you've become its most important representative?*

**Pamuk:** *I can say quite honestly that I don't regret it. After my country was so tormented by politics and I developed an international reputation, journalists from all*



*over the world began talking to me about my country's problems. It was inevitable, something one cannot escape.” (Bednarz and Hage 2005)*

Istanbul is the key in the construction of the authorization/entitlement mechanism that makes Pamuk a spokesperson for Turkey. Because Pamuk lives in and writes about Istanbul, and because Istanbul's duality is constructed as a proxy to stand in for Turkey's liminality, Pamuk is automatically granted the right not only to speak about Turkey, but also be the face that presents Turkey to the outside world. What is also interesting is that Pamuk does not seem to have any qualms either for being associated with such a position or with the fact that this position is a privileged one. He thinks that this association is a “privilege,” which he could not have refused. This is something that has led him to be considered as *“the leading contemporary interpreter of Turkish society to the western world: his novels, now invariably translated into English, explore the dilemmas and divisions of a land that is both east and west, Islamist and secular, rich and poor, ancient and modern, and much more besides”* (The Economist 2004).

This entitlement can be considered as symbolic capital, which celebrities and artist brands alike possess, is also a form of legitimation, and the conversion of celebrity capital into symbolic power depends on winning public recognition from those with established power in the field (Driessens 2013 a,b), which is illustrated by Arthurs and Shaw (2016). Whereas the celebrity who they analyze, Russell Brand, sought that recognition from the heralded authoritative current affairs TV programme *Newsnight's* star presenter and secured political legitimacy as an anti-austerity spokesperson, Orhan Pamuk, through the duality he embodies and produces, transfers his symbolic power onto Turkey as a nation-brand.

## Theme # 2: Orhan Pamuk's hybrid literary style that combines East and West

Brown (2006: p. 12) notes that "The most striking development in the contemporary book business is the celebration of celebrity." As referred to in countless reviews and interviews, not only has Orhan Pamuk himself come to embody what is expected of Turkey as a hybrid between east and west, but his style is also perceived to exemplify the same positioning. This combination of supposedly opposing styles has been described by the reviewers, sometimes as a "*contemporary blend of modernist and postmodernist techniques*," (Eder 2001), or sometimes "*the irony and playfulness*" in Pamuk's work is considered a "*response to a literary dilemma*" (Buchan 2004). This blending of techniques has been recognised by his readers as well, as one book reviewer describes and then links the dualities of his technique to the dualities of Turkey:

*"He then came up with a brilliant idea: he would continue to write about the Turkish issues he knew best but would adopt the stylistic devices pioneered by such Western writers as Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Vladimir Nabokov, Italo Calvino, and Jorge Luis Borges. He thus created a new hybrid form—the experimental, Western-style novel on Turkish themes—for which he would become famous....A central concern in all of Pamuk's novels is Turkey's troubled love-hate relationship with the West"* (McGaha 2004)

*"Orhan Pamuk, Turkey's bestselling novelist, mixes the methods of Islam and the West. It's an art to die for."* (The Independent 2001)

Consequently, the fact that both Orhan Pamuk himself and his style embody hallmarks of hybridity is reflected in how consumers, both end consumers and purveyors of discourse around Orhan Pamuk such as journalists and book reviewers, interpret his style. The end consumers both consume the books and these discourses around Orhan Pamuk produced by newspapers and book reviewers. Ultimately, the discourse of in-betweenness around Orhan Pamuk is also used as a resource in interpreting the stories of in-betweenness in his books. For example, several amazon.com and amazon.co.uk users compare Pamuk to both western

writers such as Kafka and Auster and eastern writers such as Ishiguro, immediately rendering Pamuk hybrid:

*"The New Life is certainly not an easy read, and is at times probably too clever (and convoluted) for its own good. However, Pamuk's writing is (for me) never less than sinuously infectious and I would compare his style (and this novel, in particular) to the likes of Kafka, Marquez, Ishiguro and even Paul Auster (and indeed The New Life shares its ending with a similar conclusion to one of Auster's greatest and most famous novels)" (Amazon Reviewer 818)*

*"The author is a progressive Muslim intellect who opposes the conflict between East and West (East and West being relative terms and as the Koran rightly states "To God belongs the East and West), and holds to the principle that "all good art comes from mixing things from different roots and cultures." Two cultures should not generate conflict but rather an amalgamation in which the values of each one are preserved and respected" (Nebenzethal 2002)*

The consumers form their understanding of hybridity by describing Orhan Pamuk himself as being in-between. In this way, Turkey as an in-between nation-brand is concretized in the consumers' minds through an understanding of what it is to be in-between:

*"In his book, Pamuk writes "An artist should never succumb to hubris of any kind, he should simply paint the way he sees fit rather than troubling over East or West." - and that is precisely how Pamuk offers his progressive perspective, richly Eastern in nature, but pleasantly influenced by Western ideologies as well. He creates an amalgamation of both cultures, in which the values of each one are preserved and respected, and does it quite successfully" (Amazon Reviewer 414)*

It is also through building blocks such as the quote above that Pamuk himself enables the production and consumption of Turkey as in-between and hybrid, feeding through the dualities of Turkey, through both his own work and his style. His own positioning of himself is juxtaposed with the positioning of Turkey as a nation-brand, rendering it easier for the co-creators of both brands to produce and consume the discourse of the hybrid.

### Theme #3: Romanticizing Tensions: Reproducing Turkey's Dualities between Modern and Traditional, East and West

One benefit that consumers draw from Orhan Pamuk's books is a delight in consuming the tension between Modern and Traditional, East and West. Readers rely on Pamuk's books to vicariously sample this tension: they frequently use certain words that highlight the tensions that Turkey needs to deal with when talking about Orhan Pamuk and his work. Words such as "*dilemma*" and also "*paradox*" are very commonly used by reviewers and interviewers to denote the state of affairs through Pamuk's work and persona. These romanticized tensions of Turkey in reality become another way to highlight Turkey's dualities. One reviewer on amazon.co.uk, for example, titles his/her review "*a novel about critical dilemmas of Modern Turkey*" (Amazon Reviewer 212) another uses the title "*dilemma of modern Turkey*," (Amazon Reviewer 111) and one other chose the title "*Snow explores the discord of cultures in modern Turkey*" (Amazon Reviewer 515). The Der Spiegel interview, which is also mentioned above, uses the title "*Orhan Pamuk and the Turkish Paradox*," (Bednarz and Hage, 2005); one other review that appeared in the San Francisco Gate comments that "*exposing their faces, paradoxes are revealed*" (Maury 2004). Schizophrenia, a psychological condition having multiple personalities, is one other oft-repeated word used to describe the way in which Orhan Pamuk's work relates to Istanbul and Turkey. A review by Judy Stone, for instance, notes that in Pamuk's *The Black Book* "*Orhan Pamuk is nothing if not ambitious. All he wanted to do in his new novel, The Black Book, he says, was to write a huge, richly textured narrative that would capture the schizophrenic angst of Istanbul, a city in a country straddling two continents. He thus joined the search for an answer to the perennial Turkish question he defines as: 'Are we European? Or are we Asian?'*" (Stone 1994). Similarly, when asked the question "do you believe the

constant confrontation between Turkey's Eastern and Western impulses will ever be peacefully resolved?" by the *Paris Review* interviewer, Pamuk answers:

*"I am an optimist. Turkey should not worry about having two spirits, belonging to two different cultures, having two souls. Schizophrenia makes you intelligent". (Pamuk interviewed by Gurraa-Quintana 2005).*

This commodification and romanticization of the tension based on the dualities of Istanbul and Turkey is repeated in the amazon.com and amazon.co.uk reviews as well. For example, an amazon.co.uk reviewer writes:

*"What kept my attention is the struggle of Islam and the West, a topic in which I am immensely interested. Pamuk is a diligent student of history. The New Life, like other of his novels, is littered with cultural, political and religious references which are very relevant to the debate of Islamization vs. Westernization. This is what makes it a compelling read for me. This is what kept my attention to the book. If not for those stray references about, Islam, the Quran, the Prophet, Kemal Ataturk and the West, I would have left this book unread or drifted off to sleep in one of those metaphysical, surreal passages of gore and death" (Amazon Reviewer 616)*

Through this romanticization, Orhan Pamuk achieves an iconic brand status. Iconic brands provide powerful myths so as to help consumers in resolving cultural contradictions (see Holt 2004). By pairing Turkey as nation-brand with Orhan Pamuk and his work as an iconic brand, the consumers reproduce Turkey unwittingly and repeatedly.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, we argue and show that Pamuk's works have become one of the venues where "Turkey brand" is reiterated, shaped and reshaped in alignment with the discourse in the political/international and the cultural, highlighting the role of cultural products as nation brand makers and the markets as where arts and politics and international relations intersect. Cultural products through consumers of these products can become venues where nation brands, knowingly or unknowingly, are reproduced; reproducing the existing perceptions and real and perceived global political hierarchies. We had two goals in this

article. The first was to show and deconstruct the mechanisms of nation-branding, what we called the themes in our case, at work on the market/consumer side that runs parallel to the political/international and the cultural field. The second was to draw attention to the recently developing field that brings nation branding and international relations together so that culture and more importantly cultural products and their unintended consequences are as important as the intended efforts of a state in building a nation brand.

We have identified three mechanisms whereby this “Turkey brand” is reproduced and reified, when the dualities in Pamuk’s work have been hybridized and associated with Turkey. The first mechanism came into life with the declaration of Orhan Pamuk as the novelist of Istanbul and the dualities of Istanbul, being straddled over two continents, were associated with all of Turkey. The second mechanism of reification and reproduction happened through Orhan Pamuk’s style that combines different styles; this stylistic duality was immediately associated with Turkey as well. Finally, the tensions of modern Turkey, which is an oft-repeated theme in Pamuk’s works, were romanticized in a manner that is again associated with Turkey. In other words, repeated dualities on the reception side leads to creation of an intricate web of reiteration and reification mechanisms for brand Turkey that is based on the idea of east-meets-west. We highlighted the reification mechanisms that were created by the consumers of Orhan Pamuk’s works, arguing that in reviews and interviews about Pamuk’s works, the dualities that the author presented were associated with the dualities of Turkey, reproducing and reinforcing the east-meets-west brand of Turkey. We illustrated how through the rubric (device?) of giving the “east” a voice, the entrenchment of Turkey’s positioning in the bridge metaphor and its corollary, that of liminality, is produced and consumed by and through the market.

Yet given all these factors, the case of producing “brand Turkey” in the markets in alignment with the political/international and the cultural is, sadly, a case of Orientalism — produced and reproduced as such. Furthermore, such Orientalist practices (Said 1978) accumulate economic capital, as they produce what the Orientalist consumer prefers to read. Thus, this looking-glass orientalism, or auto-orientalism, both extends into symbolic and economic realms. The cultural producers are in a sense forced to accept these hegemonic codifications as the true orient in order to gain internationally accepted cultural, symbolic and economic capital – this is the very premise by which Orhan Pamuk becomes so powerful as a cultural producer. Any critic of Orientalism in such work that may not readily accept this code still operates within this code, as the art market is tuned into the basic working mechanisms of Orientalist understandings of the relationship between east, west and their meeting point. Therefore, we find that, similar to Browning and Oliviera’s (2016a) analysis of brand Africa, it is a European/Western system of cultural production and positioning that articulates the Orient, and within this system, the cultural producer “from the bridge,” ends up reinforcing the codes of Orientalism.

As mentioned earlier “symbolic capital’ is to be understood as “economic or political capital that is disavowed, mis-recognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits” (Bourdieu, 1983). Thus, Orhan Pamuk’s symbolic capital and power as producer is transformed into both economic profits within the art market and reinforcement of Turkey’s nation-brand identity. The gain might be symbolic, cultural, monetary, or a combination, but it perpetuates the dominant power and representation structured by supposedly serving as a device giving the “east” a voice. “The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways” (Said, 1984: p. 54), therefore, casting Turkey as a bridge

and entrenching its brand positioning in the bridge metaphor offers, reinforces and perpetuates an identity of belonging to both the east and the West, especially widely adopted by certain segments of society in Turkey. For example, another prominent Turkish writer, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, who writes of the absurdities of bureaucracy and everyday life in Turkey, has been heralded as ‘writing of the clash between east-and-west’ in the English translation of his book *Time Regulation Institute* (see Mishra 2015), showing how contagious these orientalist labels can be.

Overall, the positioning of Turkey as in-between has not only been the brand strategy opted by the state, but it is created, consumed and re-created by non-state actors such as Turkey’s cultural producers and cultural intermediaries and foreign cultural intermediaries. Hence, through the market mechanism, through production and consumption of books, the state and non-state actors unintentionally align in co-creating a particular positioning and reification for a nation-brand. The state, as a market making actor, co-creates and sustains a particular position within the global hierarchy for itself through a series of disjointed actors that employ the same structures of meaning, that is hybridity, that looks exotic to the parties that are involved in the construction of this meaning, and Orhan Pamuk as the unwitting actor in this brand construction.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> In 2005, Orhan Pamuk was the locus of a controversy when, during an interview with a Swiss newspaper, Pamuk stated that “a million Armenians and 30,000 Kurds were killed in this country and I’m the only one who dares to talk about it.” Saying this was going against the “official” history of Turkey, which, immediately, turned Pamuk into an object of hate, resulting in court cases and death threats (Freely, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> The Bosphorus Bridge was renamed the 15 July Martyr’s Bridge after the military coup attempt on July 15th, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Because Orhan Pamuk’s website was lagging behind in terms of interviews, in order to be up to date we searched Google for fresh interviews by using the key words “Orhan Pamuk+interview”. Our Google search was limited to a one year timeline. It encompassed the first 20 interviews that appeared in English and we took into consideration the interviews that were texts rather than audio or video.



<sup>4</sup>When there was the need to quote or to refer to these reviews or interviews and when we referred to these interviews or reviews, we did so according to their original place of publication.

<sup>5</sup> The reviews and interviews were first read by each researcher independently to identify themes, and discussed with each other. In the next stage, they were read all together by both researchers, and the hermeneutic circle continued on until saturation point. As suggested by Thompson et al. (1989), inferences were based on the entire data set, which was based on iteration. Once final themes were agreed on, each review and interview was re-examined for the final write-up. The quotes used throughout the findings are particularly clear examples of patterns/themes found in our data.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike the work of Schroeder et al. (2015) who study the making of heritage brands by the local consumers, we are interested in the co-creation of a certain image of Turkey abroad largely by foreign consumers. Also, the number of reviews and interviews related to Pamuk's earlier books outnumber the more recent ones as it takes a while for the recent novels to be translated into English and gain readership that will respond with a certain amount of reviews. Regardless of these, in order to be as current and comprehensive as possible, we tried to include the most recent interviews with Pamuk that were not posted on his personal website, via Google.

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**Table 1: The number of reviews and interviews analyzed**

Platform	Number of Reviews
amazon.com	1260
amazon.co.uk	417
Orhan Pamuk Official Website + Google Search of Book Reviews <sup>3,4</sup>	87 + 20 = 117